

**[To Rev. F. C. Cazeault]**

W9683

Beliefs And Customs - Folktypes

Accession no.

W9683

Date received

10/10/40

Consignment no.

1

Shipped from

Wash. Office

Label

Amount

5p.

WPA L. C. PROJECT Writers' Unit

Form [md]3

Folklore Collection (or Type)

## Library of Congress

Title To Rev. F. C. Cazeault, secretary Quebec.

Place of origin Oregon Date 5/9/39 (r. D. C.)

Project worker

Project editor

Remarks Translation of letter dated Feb. 5, 1840, in regard to the Cowlitz mission (over)

MAY 9 1939 Oregon

Cowlitz Feb. 5, 1840.

MAY 9 1939

To Rev. F. C. Cazeault, Secretary, Quebec. [CC?]

My dear Sir:

Having returned on the 1st of October last from a mission I had given during the summer on the upper Columbia I could not have the pleasure of staying very long with the Vicar General. I had to leave him on the 10th of the same month to take charge of the mission on the Cowlitz river which Fr Blanchet had left in order to be at Ft Vancouver during the month of September. This separation did not take place without sorrow as we were leaving each other not to meet for four months, but it was imposed on us by need and duty. At last the permission of settling permanently in the Wallamette had been granted to the advantage of its daily augmenting Catholic population; the Cowlitz mission had not been neglected either and it was assigned to me. Having left Vancouver on Thursday October 10 we took supper together at the mouth of the Wallamette, after which each went his way in order to be in his respective place on the following Sunday, which I could not do in spite of all the efforts of the men and the active part I took in the labor. I had with me a

## Library of Congress

half-breed, J. B. Boucher, and three Indians; my canoe was large and contained a large quantity of luggage, among which was a bell weighing 50 or 60 pounds. I was therefore deprived of the happiness of celebrating Mass and my people of hearing it. As soon as they heard I was coming all flocked to meet me. They welcomed me and carried my baggage to my residence. After my installation I went with my people to pay tribute to a cross erected near by.

The following days October 14, a frame was erected, the bell blessed and placed in position 40 feet above ground. I considered it an honor to ring the first Angelus myself. A consecrated bell was heard for the first time in the valley of the Cowlitz as well as in the whole extent of this vast country. Imagine a log house 30x20 feet, having a roof like a wolf's head, no ceiling, 2 and a floor leveled with an axe, and you will have an idea of the place where I spent the winter. It was also my chapel. They had decided on building another house and had even planed the lumber during the preceding winter but instead of that they determined to erect, with the same wood, a chapel 60 feet long and to leave the same house to the priest until he could get a better one. The Cowlitz mission still has but eight families including those of the H. B. Co, altogether 46 persons, exclusive of a few Indians who lived with the French and a greater or smaller number of employees according to the need. Three days in the week were set apart for the instruction of the Canadians' wives and children; the three others were given to the Indians and to the study of the Cowlitz language which is very difficult for a beginner.

The young men and the Indians who live with the French, being unable on account of their work, to attend during the day, I was obliged to give them part of the nights. For 1-1/2 or 2 hours I was kept busy teaching them the prayers, reading the answers at Mass and the way to serve it, also the Plain Chant.

At midnight Mass on the festival of Christmas they were able by means of repeated exercises to honor the birth of our Saviour, by uniting their voices to those of the angels in the GLORIA IN EXCELSIS. Soon after this they could help the priest in singing the

## Library of Congress

CREDO. The young men of the mission, as well as the half-breeds in general, who were instructed at Vancouver, owe to the kind ministrations of Dr. McLoughlin the knowledge they have of the letter of their catechism before the coming of the missionaries; a benefit/ which it was surely not the least amongst those the Canadians received at his hands and for which they owe him eternal gratitude.

Experience has taught us not to rely too much on the first demonstrations of the Indians and not to rely much on the first dispositions they manifest. Those 3 of the Cowlitz promised better success. Everywhere we meet the same obstacles which always retard the conversion of the Indians, namely polygamy, their adherence to the customs of their ancestors and, still more, to [tamanwas?], the name given to the medicine they prepare for the sick. This [tamanwas?] is generally transmitted in families and even women can pretend to the honor of making it. If anyone is sick they call in the medicine man. No danger of their asking him what he wants for his trouble; they would be afraid of insulting him. Whatever he asks is given him without the least objection; otherwise they may fear everything from the doctor who will not fail to take his revenge for a refusal by sending some misfortune, or some sickness, or even death through his medicines to the one who refused him, be he 50 leagues off. If anyone is dead, such a one killed him; then let him look out on whom the least suspicion falls; his life is in the greatest danger; the least they will do to him will be to kill his horses, if they do not kill himself, and to force him to give all that he has, through fear of death. A serious quarrel took place lately on that account. Hand play is also very common among them, they get excited and often end it with a quarrel. They add idolatry to infidelity. They paint on a piece of wood a rough likeness of a human being and keep it very precious. They believe these charms have superior power and strength and they pray to them. When they have exhausted all the resources of the [tamanwas?] which often makes the evil worse and the sick man dies, they scarcely allow his eyes to close before they are covered with a pearl bandage; his nostrils are then filled up with [aikwa?] a kind of shell they use for money; he is clad with his best clothes and wrapped up in a blanket; four posts are driven into the ground; in these posts holes

## Library of Congress

are bored through which sticks are passed upon which is placed the canoe destined to receive the corpse placed in file with his ancestors. They place him face 4 downward with his head pointing toward the mouth of the river. Not a handful of dust is laid on him; the canoe is covered with a great number of mats and all is over. Then, they present their offerings to the dead. If he was a chief or a great warrior among his men, they lay by his side his gun, his powder horn and his bag; valuable objects, such as wooden plates, axes, knives, kettles, bows, arrows, skins, etc., are placed upon sticks around his canoe. Then comes the tribute of tears which the spouses pay to each other and to their children. Day and night for a month or more continuous weeping, shouting and wailing may be heard from a great distance. When the canoe gets rotten and falls to the ground the remains are taken out, wrapped up in new blankets and laid in a new canoe. They cling so much to this kind of [sepulture?] that during the winter, a child (baptized) having died without my knowledge, I could not induce them to take him out of the canoe to give him Christian burial. This adherence to burial rites and to [tamanwas?] will cause the missionaries to be more prudent in baptizing. We have learned not to trust the repeated promises they make to us not to have recourse to [tamanwas?] if the child gets sick. You may see the progress has been very slow among them so far. Their customs and habits are so inveterate that it will take a long time for religion and the fear and knowledge of God to unroot and destroy them entirely. Polygamy is not as widely spread now as it used to be. But there is among both sexes fearful immorality. It is kept up and often taught by the whites who, by their scandalous conduct and boundless debaucheries, destroy the impressions made by the truths of religion.

This year the mission will lend the Indians seed to grow in garden patches, especially peas and potatoes. Perhaps they will then try to come 5 out of the miserable state they are languishing in when they will see that with a little trouble and labor they can ameliorate it. The peas and potatoes may make them forget the grains and [camas?]. Time does not permit me to extend this sketch.

## Library of Congress

I am etc

M Domers priests

Translated by F. B. Robert From the [French?]?

6

while the boys were marching around playing soldier, led by a youthful drummer, who pounded with might and [main?] on a small specimen of that warlike cymbol. Gradually the stock would lie down and the people retire to dream of home and the dear ones left behind; the camp would become quiet and the fires grow dimmer until its flickering flames expired; no sound would be heard except the low talk of the guards as they made their rounds or the lonesome howl of the prairie wolf as they prowled around the camp. The position seemed to us strange and the novelty had not yet been expended.

At an early hour, the camp would be aroused, preparatory for the days journey. Immediately after breakfast, the cattle would be driven into camp, then followed a scene of confusion, men and boys running hither and yon, looking for their oxen, a great many of them not yet broken sufficiently to be readily yoked, which added greatly to the uproar; the women hastily packing away cooking utensils, or frantically calling out to some child that was disposed to get within dangerous proximity to animals heels; all was hurry and bustle, but finally the teams would be yoked and hitched to their respective wagons and the word would be given for some family team to take the lead for the day, which would of course take its place in the rear the next. The train would soon be on the move stringing along the road with the loose cattle in the rear. Mr. Bradshaw soon assumed the general supervision of the movement of the train; while my grandfather enforced his orders and choose the camp. 1/8

## Library of Congress

There was no particular incident transpired until we arrived at the Big Blue revert where the first fatal accident happened in a train as